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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000133

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: NATO REVIEW PLEASED WITH ARMENIA IPAP PROGRESS,  
BUT PLAN TO CIVILIANIZE MOD NEEDS WORK

REF: YEREVAN 117

Classified By: CDA A. F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) NATO international staffers gave Armenia high marks on implementation of their Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) during a February 2 briefing to Chiefs of NATO Missions in Yerevan. Frank Boland, NATO's Staff Director of Force Planning, said that the review was "very positive" and that the Armenians were well prepared and organized and were on track to meet IPAP commitments with time to spare. He hailed the work of the GOAM inter-agency commission charged with implementation of Armenia's international obligations and noted the acquisition of new capabilities which could be deployed in support of international operations. He called into question, however, whether Armenia's Defense Ministry was prepared to implement -- or even fully understood -- commitments to "civilianize" key Defense leadership positions. End Summary.

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GENERALLY ON THE RIGHT TRACK  
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12. (C) Boland said the team's impression of Armenia's efforts had been positive, and that the GOAM clearly was committed to implementing the IPAP objectives. He said that, in general, the GOAM had set itself a realistic timetable, though the introduction of a planning program and budgeting system to the MOD would probably take longer than they expected. He also said that DFM Kirakossian had told him he would begin a practice of reporting to the Prime Minister on IPAP implementation. Guy Gerbeau of the NATO International Staff noted that Armenia's use of IMET graduates in high positions was very positive. Lorenz Meyer-Minnemann, also of the NATO International Staff, said the government had created a mechanism to flag for the Ministry of Finance priority projects for the budget. He also said the Armenians had made a positive effort to coordinate all work on Council of Europe and IPAP obligations at a high level, and that there was coherent legislation in the works providing for oversight of the armed forces.

13. (C) Boland said that the team was impressed by Armenia's new Expeditionary Medical System (EMEDS), a deployable, highly capable hospital purchased with U.S. FMF assistance funding. Boland noted that EMEDS could prove to be an important capability that Armenia may be able to contribute to international operations in the future. Members of Boland's staff questioned whether Armenia would be able to maintain this complex system in top readiness.

¶4. (C) Meyer-Minnemann also said that, while the Armenians were doing good work to bring their legislative framework into line with international standards, the team had not seen convincing evidence that this would lead to concrete improvements in elections and anti-corruption efforts, especially as demonstrated by high-level prosecutions.

¶5. (C) CDA noted that military reforms would inevitably slow down in the coming months because of the impending departure of Deputy Defense Minister Aghabekian (reftel), who has been a driving force in reforms and IPAP implementation.

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WHY ARE WE DOING THIS, AGAIN?  
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¶6. (C) Boland told the chiefs of mission that the MOD was going forward with plans to civilianize its leadership, but with considerable reluctance. He said the ministry's leadership had no apparent understanding of why they were civilianizing, and were convinced the move would lead to the collapse of the MOD. Boland said that their some officers believed that the plan called for conversion of the entire staff of the MOD to a civilian force within five years, which would wipe out institutional memory and could well lead to turbulence within the ministry. He said the draft law to civilianize the ministry had been sent to President Kocharian, but was withdrawn for further work, specifically to include the National Security Service and other sectors in the civilianization plan.

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AGHABEKIAN IN POLITICAL MODE  
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YEREVAN 00000133 002 OF 002

¶7. (C) Boland noted that, during their meetings, Aghabekian was affable as usual, but was clearly in political mode, as evidenced by his refusal to get drawn into discussions of issues such as energy security. He said the general told him he was disengaging and would be out in a few weeks. Boland also said Aghabekian suggested he would not be surprised to become defense minister in the not-too-distant future. (NOTE: Meaning, either after the May 12 parliamentary elections or 2008 presidential elections, depending on the scenario. END NOTE.)  
GODFREY